

October 15, 2009

DIRECTIVE:	JOB CORPS INFORMATION NOTICE NO. 09-26
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TO: ALL JOB CORPS NATIONAL OFFICE STAFF
ALL JOB CORPS REGIONAL OFFICE STAFF
ALL JOB CORPS CENTER DIRECTORS
ALL JOB CORPS CENTER OPERATORS
ALL NATIONAL TRAINING AND SUPPORT CONTRACTORS
ALL OUTREACH, ADMISSIONS, AND CTS CONTRACTORS

FROM: LYNN A. INTREPIDI
Interim National Director
Office of Job Corps

SUBJECT: Preventing Cold Weather Injuries and Preparing Facilities for Winter Weather

1. Purpose. To ensure that Job Corps centers are adequately prepared for winter weather conditions by following (a) the recommended heating systems maintenance provided in this Information Notice, and (b) injury prevention guidance provided in Job Corps Information Notice No. 06-23 (Best Practices for Preventing Cold Weather Injuries and the Importance of Snow Removal From Common Areas), Information Notice No. 07-16 (Preventing Cold Weather Injuries), and Information Notice No. 06-12 (Best Practices for Checking Carbon Monoxide Detection).

2. Background. As temperatures fall and winter precipitation begins in parts of the country, it is important to prepare facilities and perform preventive maintenance at Job Corps centers and take precautions to prevent injuries from occurring. In 2008 there were 21 fatalities related to winter storms and 44 fatalities due to extreme cold in the United States, according to the National Weather Service. Motor vehicle accidents, hypothermia, and frostbite were the leading causes of injury and death. The most common winter weather-related injuries include strains, sprains, and fractures due to slipping or falling on icy sidewalks, and overexertion leading to cardiac arrest as a result of shoveling snow. There is also an increased risk of carbon monoxide exposure due to malfunctioning heating units and placement of gasoline-powered portable generators indoors or near air intakes.

Last year, a number of Job Corps centers experienced significant operational and logistical problems due to ice and snow storms. An ice storm in Kentucky knocked out power to nearly a million customers including the Earle C. Clements Job Corps Center. Due to treacherous conditions, the center was unable to transport students home or to other locations in

the first 24–48 hours of the storm, so the center was required to activate its emergency action plan in order to provide basic care for students and staff stuck on center. Some of the challenges faced included finding refrigerated storage for tens of thousands of dollars in prescription medication and vaccines, preparing and serving food, keeping buildings heated, and providing activities for students in order to maintain calm and cooperation.

3. Action. In an ongoing effort to ensure the safety and well-being of students and staff during extreme weather conditions, the National Office of Job Corps recommends that centers continue to implement the following preventive measures to reduce the potential for injuries, fatalities, and major property damage:

- a. *Review and test the center’s emergency action plan.* The first step to prepare for an emergency like a weather-related disaster is to develop a comprehensive plan that will be used in such an event. Once a plan has been developed, conduct drills to test the plan’s thoroughness. Refer to the Job Corps Policy and Requirements Handbook (PRH) Chapter 5, Section 5.20, R3 for detailed requirements.
- b. *Participate in state and local emergency planning committees.* Ensure that the Job Corps center is not isolated from the community in which it is located. Attend local emergency planning meetings, get to know emergency services personnel and first responders, and take an active role in local emergency planning activities.
- c. *Build relationships with local businesses and schools.* Make the Job Corps center an important community partner. Find ways to plan and collaborate with local businesses and schools to ensure that the center will be able to procure necessities during emergencies.
- d. *Avoid ice.* Walking on ice is extremely dangerous. Many cold-weather injuries result from falls on ice-covered sidewalks, steps, driveways, and porches. Keep all steps and walkways as free of ice as possible by using rock salt or another chemical de-icing compound. Sand or kitty litter may also be used on walkways to reduce the risk of slipping.
- e. *Dress for the cold.* Wearing proper clothing keeps the body warm and dry. Layering of clothing versus one thick layer is a more effective way to stay warm. The best clothing has good ventilation so that sweat can evaporate. Wet clothing increases heat loss and the potential for hypothermia.
- f. *Remove snow.* Clearing snow from stairs, sidewalks, roadways, and other areas accessible to students and staff (e.g., entrances, exits, and awnings) is critical for maintaining safe grounds and preventing injuries. Personnel responsible for snow removal should be physically able to perform the work. The National Safety Council provides a cold weather fact sheet that offers several tips for avoiding injury: http://downloads.nsc.org/pdf/factsheets/Snow_Shoveling.pdf.
- g. *Know the signs of cold weather injuries* in order to recognize when students or

staff may need medical attention:

- (1) Frostnip usually affects areas that are exposed to the cold, such as the cheeks, nose, ears, fingers, and toes, leaving them white and numb. Frostnip can be treated at home by placing affected fingers under one's armpits. Other affected areas can be covered with warm hands. Never rub the affected areas.
- (2) Frostbite is a serious injury in which deep layers of tissues freeze, causing tissue damage. Victim should be taken to a medical facility for treatment.
- (3) Hypothermia is a life-threatening condition in which the core, or rectal, body temperature falls below 95° F. Persons suffering from hypothermia may lose consciousness. Victim should be taken to a medical facility for treatment.

h. *Perform preventive maintenance and weatherproofing.* The end of daylight savings time is a good reminder to inspect heating systems and to change batteries in carbon monoxide detectors. Many of the leading insurance carriers recommend the following winter weather tips:

- (1) Schedule inspection and cleaning of furnaces, ductwork, and heating systems.
- (2) Caulk and weather-strip doors and windows to reduce drafts.
- (3) Replace batteries in thermostats, if necessary, smoke detectors, and carbon monoxide (CO) monitors.
- (4) During power outages, disconnect electrical appliances not connected to surge protectors to avoid power surges when electricity is restored.
- (5) Keep exterior doors closed to help eliminate drafts.
- (6) Remove ice and snow from rooftops to avoid structural collapse, damage to roof, or interior leaking.

i. *To prevent pipes from freezing,* the following steps are suggested:

- (1) Detach all garden hoses and shut off water to sprinkler systems.
- (2) Install faucet covers on all external faucets.
- (3) Make sure that the main water valve is accessible.
- (4) Wrap pipes nearest exterior walls and in crawl spaces with heating tape or pipe insulation to prevent freezing.
- (5) Keep all windows near water pipes closed or cover open-air vents.

- (6) Insulate outside walls or unheated areas of the building.
- g. *To prevent winter weather vehicle accidents*, centers are encouraged to review the following safe winter driving guidelines:
 - (1) National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:
http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/Seasonal_Advisories/WinterDrivingTips/wintertips6_10.html.
 - (2) The National Safety Council:
http://downloads.nsc.org/pdf/factsheets/Winter_Your_Car_and_You.pdf.

Addressees are to ensure that this Information Notice is distributed to all appropriate staff.

4. Expiration Date. Until superseded.

5. Inquiries. Direct all inquiries to Marsha Fitzhugh at (202) 693-3099 or fitzhugh.marsha@dol.gov, Kelley Clark at (202) 693-3089 or clark.kelley@dol.gov, or Heather Edmonds at (202) 693-3774 or edmonds.heather@dol.gov.